

Translation Notes

The following pages are excerpts from *Les armées alliées en Orient après l'armistice de 1918*, Vol 1 *L'Armée française d'Orient, L'Armée d'Hongarie* (11 November 1918 - 10 September 1919) under the direction of General J Bernachot.

This series is not a history, as such, but a collection of material from the French archives edited, annotated and placed in roughly chronological order. It makes no particular attempt at analysis, merely presenting the dry facts as they can be seen in the contemporary reports, telegrams, orders etc. That a statement is made does not mean it has been checked, let alone be true, only that it appeared in a reliable seeming document from the archives.

The series is also not particularly well edited: as well as a tremendous number of typographical errors and repetitions, the sections alternate between past and present tenses, according to the language of the document they repeat. I have tried to put everything in the past tense for consistency but this has led to some very awkward phrasing.

I have generally only included materials of direct interest to wargamers – orders of battle, movements, strengths etc – relating to the Romanian, Serbian, Czechoslovak and Hungarian armies and battles. I have left in a bit of political and social material but consider it, except when dealing with factual events, to be unreliable at best and completely wrong at worst. There is extensive detail on the forces and movements of the French in the area, but I did not feel it warranted the effort to include it as they remained a peace-keeping force (albeit not particularly neutral).

Much of the material on the Hungarians is from contemporary intelligence reports and is therefore not necessarily entirely reliable – especially the political items – but the military items on the other armies is likely to be quite accurate, since they were allies and their were mutual liaison officers on the staffs.

I have left out most references to the Banat, which is the area around Timișoara (a.k.a. Temesvár), disputed by the Romanians and Serbs. The Allies imposed a neutral zone and the French forces mainly managed to keep those two nations apart. Unfortunately, although they tried to do the same with Hungary, they were much less successful with respect to the Romanian claims on Transylvania and Czechoslovak claims on northern Hungary.

I have changed all place names to those currently in use. This has proved tricky for many smaller places in Romania and Slovakia as generally the Hungarian name is used in the original (very occasionally the German). Adding to the problem is the many transcription errors in the names, making identification much more difficult. Where I have not been able to place a name to a modern town, it is indicated by *italics*.

My additions and notes are in square brackets [thus].

Curly brackets {thus} indicate the explanation of an omitted section or sections.

All footnotes are mine.

Readers should be careful not to confuse the “Army of Hungary” which is the French forces in the area, and part of the “Allied Armies of the Orient”, with the “Hungarian Army”, also known as the “Red Army”, which is used for the armed forces of the Soviet Hungarian state. At the risk of redundancy I have frequently explicitly noted that the Army of Hungary was French.

Similarly, the “Army of the Danube” has nothing to do with the Danube in Hungary, but is an Allied formation (mostly Greek, partly French) on the Black Sea coast. Much of it was guarding Bessarabia (basically modern Moldova) from the Soviet Russians. Its morale was very low and it was chronically understrength from disease and demobilisation. The French therefore wanted the Romanians to garrison the whole line against the Russians – since it was Romania that had chosen to annex it from Russia at the end of the Great War in the first place. This was a major reason for the Allies’ continued disapproval of Romania’s persistence in making Hungary its top military priority.

– MP, September 2005



{The “Neutral Zone” which the Allies attempted to put between the Hungarians and the Romanians is shown in Map 6. It is specified more fully in the early chapters of the book, which also include sections on the claims of both parties regarding its partition and the disagreements over that, and other issues, that led to the war.}

Chapter VI

{Preliminary material about Romanian positions.}

The Serbian Positions on the Line of Demarcation

During this time [about 15 April] the Serbs organised themselves. According to information received from the GHQ of the Serbian Army, the Danube Division held the line of demarcation in the following manner:

a. From Dobo (14 km NE of Subotica) to Mélykút exclusive:

- 8th IR
- 1st Field Artillery Group

b. From Mélykút inclusive to the Danube:

- 9th IR
- 3rd CR
- Field Artillery Group

c. At Subotica:

- HQ of the Danube ID
- Staff of the 1st CB
- an IR
- a CR
- Mountain Artillery Group
- Howitzer Group
- Horse Artillery Battery
- Engineer Company
- Services

* * *

The Hungarian Attack and the Romanian Riposte

During the night of 15/16 April, after an artillery preparation, the Hungarians attacked the front held by the Romanian 6th ID and 7th ID in the Kőrös/Criş valley. This action, which did not obtain substantial results considering its great importance, was the occasion – or the pretext – for a counter-attack along the whole front by the Romanian troops who, pushing back the Hungarians, took over their positions and started their progress to the west.

The Romanian front line was composed of the 2nd Light ID, the second line by the 1st Light ID. Together they were aimed at the general direction of Sebiş. They were guarded to their left flank by a detachment aiming at Radna via the Mureş valley.

At the end of the day the Romanian forces occupied the following points:

- | | | |
|------------------------|-----|-------------------------|
| – Mureş valley | ... | <i>Totvarad</i> |
| – Crişu Alb valley | ... | <i>Bokseg-Hoblmezes</i> |
| – Crişu Pietros valley | ... | <i>Vaşcău</i> |

They took 100 prisoners and captured five 10cm howitzers and 21 MGs. They counted 300 Hungarian bodies.

Faced with this situation the instructions [to the French troops] regarding the destruction of telephone and telegraph communications with non-occupied Hungary were renewed. The link between Arad and Budapest, which had been kept, was suppressed.

{paragraph about French positions}

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Request for Explanation of the Minister of War on the Matter of the Battalion of the 3rd Colonial IR.

It was on this date, 19 April, that the commander of the [French] Army of Hungary received a request directly from the President of the Council, Minister for War, for an explanation on the incident of 21 March, in the course of which the 1st Battalion of the 3rd Colonial IR had been directed by the Hungarians to Békéscsaba, instead of Timișoara, and then had been disarmed. Explaining the conditions in which the incident had occurred (nightfall in an unknown country, numerical superiority of the Hungarians, the fear of the battalion commander of provoking a very serious incident), the commander of the Army of Hungary, while covering the senior officer in question, made known that there was an insufficient number and quality of officers in the Research Commission which had been taken, with many difficulties, from the cadres of the Army of Hungary.



He also stated that the arms had been immediately returned by the Hungarian government and that by way of reprisal some 14 x 105mm guns with 120 shells, 4 x 88mm guns, 53 machine-guns, 287 rifles and 10 telemeters had been seized in Szeged.

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Progression of Romanian Forces

Measures imposed on the [French] Army of Hungary by this Advance

The Romanian advance continued. After difficult combats, Sebiş and *Algypes* were occupied. On the 19th the 5th Light IR and an artillery battery occupied Radna. The troops on the Mureş reached Căpruţa and Conop.

Faced with this progress, the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies of the Orient, asked to be kept up to date daily with the interior situation in Hungary and, in particular, the state of morale in Arad and Szeged with regard to the Romanian advance. He also gave orders concerning propping up the Romanian left wing in case it retired. When transmitting this message the commander of the Army of Hungary reminded everyone that they were in a state of war and it was useful to be ready to march, from the first order, under the conditions fixed by the order #124 of 13 January 1919.

At the end of the day, the Romanian front ran along the following line:

- *Tekso* (Tisza valley);
- Seini (Someş valley);
- Crasna (14 km west of Zalău);
- *Feketeto crest* (4 km W of *Csucsa* [Ciucea?]);
- Vaşcău (Crişu Pietros valley)
- Sebiş (Crişu Alb valley)
- Radna (Mureş valley)

The army advanced 18 km on the right wing, 10 km in the centre and 55–60 on the left wing.

On the 20th, after the arrival of reinforcements, the Romanian effectives in Radna were evaluated to be an infantry brigade and a field artillery group of 3 batteries.

{Paragraphs relating to the French responses}

During the day of 21 April the Romanian GHQ took stock of its units: Vynohravdiv (Tisza valley); *Okorito* [Odoreu?] (Someş valley); Merk (10 km NW of Carei); Valea lui Mihai; Letávértes; *Uj Palota* (10 km W of Oradea); Ineu; Pânkota; *Villagos*.

On the 22nd the Romanian left reached the line *Agya*–Chişineu-Criş–Şimand.

General Berthelot, who transmitted to the Romanian command the thoughts of the commander of the [French] Army of Hungary concerning Arad, found out that Romanians, keen to push up to the Tisza, had received orders to turn Arad from as far away as possible, but that the supply of the troops would probably necessitate the use of the rail lines. Nevertheless, they kept in very close liaison with General de Gondrecourt.

{Paragraphs relating to French and Serb movements}

On the night of 23 April, after lively Hungarian resistance, Romanian troops reached Debrecen. The left wing was lined up on Salonta, *Szekudvar* [Socodor?] and Şimand.

From information supplied by the GHQ of the Romanian Army the exact situation on the Tisza can be discovered:

The HQ of the Romanian Army of Transylvania (General Mardarescu) was at Sibiu;

The northern detachment, under the orders of General Olteanu, operating on horseback on the Tisza (HQ around Vynohravdiv on the night of the 22nd), consisted of a cavalry brigade, a Transylvanian regiment, two battalions and two batteries of artillery. This detachment was the flank guard, to the north, of the Army of Transylvania;

The northern group, commanded by General Mosiou (HQ in *Szentgyörgy*) consisted of a cavalry division and the 6th ID and 7th ID. A Transylvanian infantry division and the 6th Light IR were in reserve for the group. The cavalry, bottled between the Someş and the swamp of *Nagylap*, could not reach their objective of Mátészalka. The front of the group passed to the west of Carei, Valea lui Mihai and Oradea;

The southern group, commanded by General Dabija (HQ on the night of the 23rd in Ineu) held a front of 10 km from the south of Oradea up to the Mureş. This group consisted of the two light divisions, each of two brigades, and the 1st and 5th Light IRs (of the 1st LID). It held the line Salonta to *Szekudvar* [Socodor?]. The 1st and 5th Light IRs, reinforced by an artillery group of two 105mm batteries¹ and a cavalry squadron, formed the Romanian left

¹ This might be a typo, the original on which it is based seems to say an artillery group **and** two 105mm batteries.



wing. They belonged to the 1st LID (General Lecas) who had his command post and bulk of his forces at Chişineu-Criş.² The 2nd LID held *Nagyseried* with one brigade and the second brigade was at *Feketegarniat*.

The army reserve was the 18th Transylvanian ID [unknown location], the 4th Light ID of the 1st LID at Deva.

The southern group's objective was Békéscsaba. At this time the Romanian command only intended to occupy the neutral zone, with the intention of pressing on to the Tisza later. But the passive attitude of the French troops on the line of the Mureş worried the Romanians, who wanted to see the [French] Army of Hungary link up with the movement of its left wing to the north. They would also extend their action towards Chop and Mukachëvo if it was assured that the Czechoslovakian troops were also operating in the direction of Chop.

The Hungarians massacred numerous Romanian civilians in front of this Romanian advance. The population affected fled to the north to escape.

After fighting, the [Hungarian] Székely division sent negotiators to ask if they could march on Budapest at the side of the Romanians in order to overthrow the Bolshevik régime. Faced with the refusal of the Romanian command, these elements retired to the northwest.

On the morning of the 25th, the heads of the columns of the Romanian 1st Light ID and 2nd Light ID reached a point 15 km southeast of Gyula.

The advance of the Romanian troops was, in general, welcomed and considered as a safeguard against Communism. But the Hungarian troops fought vigorously and the 2nd Light ID ran into fierce resistance during the first two days of operation in the Crişu Alb valley towards *Hamalgy-Aczfalva*.

The Romanian command did not intend to pass the Tisza, except at Szolnok, but to occupy the principal bridgeheads [crossings?] on the river and to be able to enter into liaison north of Chop with the Czechoslovakian troops at Uzhhorod.

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The Hungarians Evacuate the Left Bank of the Tisza

Hounded by the Romanians, the Hungarians continued to retreat, while fighting, on the whole front. The evacuation of everyone to the left bank of the Tisza was done in good order. All the railway material was taken across, as well as the engineering works, while the roads and rail lines were destroyed. Placed under the command of Böhm, the former Minister for War, the Hungarian forces intended to prevent the Romanians from crossing the Tisza.

Seeing these plans, the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies of the Orient told the commander of the [French] Army of Hungary that as the Romanians progressed he should withdraw to Arad the troops placed to its north.

The French units occupied the town itself and, continuing to separate the Serbs and Romanians, awaited new orders before they would intervene on the right bank of the Mureş.

The Romanians were however allowed use the railway and road network, for their supply needs only, without passing to the left bank of the Mureş to the west of the Arad meridian. They could only station such troops in the town as were strictly necessary for supply purposes.

The Bolsheviks who had fled to Arad after the fighting were to be expelled.

On the 26th the Romanians moved forward, after heavy combat, to reach Békéscsaba–Újkígyós with some covering elements four or five kilometres further west yet. During the course of the offensive 60 locomotives, 1,000 wagons and 5,000 rifles were captured.

Liaison was made with the left of the Romanian army by a platoon of [French] Spahis who, lining north-east, without crossing the line of Földeák–Apátfalva, were used to obtain information about the front, the placement of troops, the direction of the Hungarian retreat and the attitude of the population. A company of Serbs was also pushed to Makó. The [French] Army of Hungary received orders from the Commander-in-Chief to keep a strictly defensive attitude until new orders were sent, and the general commanding the 76th ID was ordered not to send any detachments north of the Mureş, neither French nor Serb. The acquisition of Makó having been made, an exclusively French garrison was to be sent, which meant that the Serb elements presently there were to be replaced.

The execution of these orders was very popular in Makó. The occupation, besides, had the advantage of suppressing a centre of Bolshevism which, by reason of its proximity, risked contaminating Szeged.

By understanding with the Serbian GHQ, the Serbian troops on the Mureş front assured the defence between Kiszombor and *Ninszentpeter* inclusive. They remained under French command.

The Romanian left continued to advance. The 6th ID and 2nd Light ID moved forward towards Szolnok, where a bridgehead had been organised by the Hungarians. They offered bitter resistance and serious fighting took place on the Hortobágy Canal. By contrast the 1st [Light] ID marched to *Szegretel* without seeming to meet any opposition at all.

² The appendix relating to this matter suggests some of the bulk was at *Erdohegy*, that the advanced elements were at *Szekudvar* [Socodor?] and the rearguard at Nádab.



On the 30th, at 1800 hours, Commandant Cervoni, liaison officer with the Romanian Army, gave the following information on the situation:

The Hungarians, who were resisting east of Rakamaz, had been thrown off the left bank of the Tisza. The Romanian Army has reached the line: left bank of the Tisza, from the confluence of the Someş to Tiszalök inclusive, Balmasújváros, west of Karcag, west of Kisujszállás, Túkeve, Mezőtúr, Szarvas, Szentés, Mindszent, Hódmezővásárhely.

On 1 May the commander of the [French] Army of Hungary received the following telegram from General Pelle:

Prague, 30 April 1919. #2002/3. The Hennok Group occupied Chop on the night of 29 April. Patrols have visited Mukachëvo. Contact has not yet been established with Romanian troops south of Chop. Have received order to not cross the line Mukachëvo–Chop–Sátoraljaújhely without new instructions.

In the same telegram, General Pelle also asked for information on the situation of the Olteanu detachment.

Szeged was quite calm, despite fears that there would be agitation. The Bolshevik troops left Hódmezővásárhely on the 23rd. On the 27th three troop trains¹ from Makó passed Hódmezővásárhely heading towards Szentés, where they were met by three other trains which had come from Budapest.

Kecskemét and Nagykőrös seem to have become important concentration points, as well as Cegléd, HQ of the Hungarian Army. Béla Kun was said to be there.

During the night of 1 May, Romanian troops occupied the line Mukachëvo–Tizadob–Tiszafüred–Kunhegyes–Törökszentmiklós–Tiszaföldvár–Szentés. A proper link with the Czechoslovakian troops was made in Mukachëvo.

[See Map 6]

* * *

The Székellers

The Székely Division had tried to make contact with the commander of the [French] Army of Hungary at the start of April.

On 2 May the Commander-in-Chief received the following message:

By your telegram #2850/2B dated 5 April, you conveyed to me an account of the approach made to you by Count Pallavicini, where he offered the assistance of the Székellers under certain conditions, and in particular the guaranty to him that the Romanian advance would be halted. On 19 April I signalled this offer to Paris, as it seemed useful.

On 20 April, the Minister sent the following response, #4338 BS/3:

Point 1: The propositions of Count Pallavicini are not to be accepted by the Romanian government as concerns the Székellers. They should not be followed up.

2: The propositions have moreover led to a protest by the Serbian government, who claim that the Pallavicini offer was provoked by the French command.

Also, on 10 April, the Minister for Foreign Affairs sent to M. de Fontenay, under document #149, instructions relating to these matters.

I am telling you of this document in case you have not already learned of it. The policies of the Entente and the directives to follow with respect to this matter must be clear to you.

The telegram, which the commander of the Army of Hungary had known about, stated that “there can be no question of accepting the Székellers’ offer while they make a condition that the southeastern region of Transylvania, where they live, not be occupied by Romanians. There is some doubt about the eastern limits of Transylvania,” added M. Pichon, “but it is evident that, under the threat of denying all the principles for which they fought, the Allies cannot envisage that the part of that land closest to Romania should form part of the Hungarian state.”

As well, the Minister warned M. de Fontenay to be on guard “against the tendency in Belgrade circles to impute the Romanians current difficulties to their ambitions. The Serbs should understand that their interests are identical, at present, to that of the Romanians and that they have the same enemies – Hungarians and Bulgarians.”

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¹ Thought to contain about 1,000 men. The ones from Budapest were estimated to have 2,500 men.



General Prezan's Approach in Paris Concerning a Concentric March by the Allies on Budapest Measures Taken by the Commander of the [French] Army of Hungary in Case of this Eventuality

General Berthelot, commanding the [Allied] Army of the Danube, transmitted a telegram from General Prezan, commander of the Romanian Army, to Paris. In this Prezan asked for a concentric march be made on Budapest by all the Allied armies in order to "knock out" Hungary. In case of this eventuality, the commander of the Allied Armies of the Orient gave orders on 2 May for the following measures:

{Various French troop movements, but no change in the defensive posture}

The Romanian offensive, although slowed by the fatigue of the troops, kept up its pressure. The initial objectives had been to reach the Tisza, to establish themselves on its western bank, with some strong bridgeheads on the eastern bank, and to close the hole around Mukachëvo by establishing liaison with the Czech troops in Uzhhorod region. But, thanks to the rapidity of the advance and the lack of opposition, the plan was modified. The Romanian GHQ orders of 24 April envisaged action in the north, around Chop and Mukachëvo. Those points were not yet to be passed, at least to the north, until it was assured that the Czechs were operating towards Chop from their side.

The general commanding the Romanian southern group was asked "to find out, by whatever means, the intentions of the French command – the GHQ not understanding the attitude of the French on the Mureş line – at least ensuring that this passive attitude is not due to Serb intrigues."

In Budapest the population was panic-stricken and expected new Romanian attacks. Disorder reigned. The Red Guards had pillaged pretty much everywhere and food was lacking. The shops were shut. During the night of 1 May the population slept completely dressed, fearing an order for general pillaging. They awaited the arrival of the occupation troops impatiently. Rumours circulated that the members of the Central Committee were fleeing. The impression was that the end of the Soviet government was near.

The Red Guards, after having defended the bridgehead of Szolnok for eight hours, fled to Budapest, leaving the bridges there intact and in Romanian hands; those of Csongrád were similarly taken. Taking into account the fatigue of their troops, it was the Romanian command's intention to relieve the front units of the northern group with the 16th Transylvanian ID and those of the southern group with the 18th Transylvanian ID.

At Tokaj a Romanian company and a squadron crossed to the right bank of the Tisza to ensure the safety of the bridge and to look to link up with the Czechs, who were 20 kilometres away.

On 5 May the entire left bank of the Tisza was occupied by the Romanians and a request was made to the Budapest government for a mutual cessation of hostilities and the recognition, without conditions, of all the Romanian territorial claims. Rumours also spread that Béla Kun had transferred power to Andrássy.

The Romanian government thought that the occasion was good to press home its advantages and on 6 May General Graziani, commanding the [Allied] Army of the Danube, informed the commanders of the Allied Armies of the Orient and the [French] Army of Hungary of Romania's desire to pursue offensive operations against Hungary, "so as to force them to definitively lower their arms and, thus, have forces available to defend the Dnestr [from the Soviet Russians]". Consequently the Romanian GHQ gave the order to cross the Tisza and carry on to Budapest.

But after General Prezan, commander of the General Staff of the Romanian Army, gave advice to his government, the movement on Budapest was adjourned.

Perhaps the activation of this project could have avoided the Hungarian attack on the Czech front.

Such an operation seemed easily realisable, but it can be predicted that any new success by the Romanian Army would only have increased Romania's appetite, which was growing daily. So for most of a month Romania basically limited its ambitions to a part of the Banat, and the opposition which was growing daily against the cessation of *Torontal* to Serbia, and they it tried to demonstrate via ethnographic maps that the region was mostly peopled by Romanians.

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Professor Brown's Mission

{Another attempt at mediation, this time by an American professor. More Allied troop movements.}

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The Political and Military Situation in Hungary in April 1919

It should be noted that three former colleagues of Károlyi were part of the Communist government, in particular Böhm and Pogoni. There was therefore a link between Károlyi and the Budapest cabinet. Károlyi's responsibility for the events of the time thus cannot be disputed.



The important fact, at the start of April, was the fusion of Hungary's Communist and Socialist parties. The program adopted rested on the dictatorship of the proletariat and a system of Soviets. It was now much more a question of national demands than of social demands.

Bolshevik influence grew. An envoy from Lenin, Samueli, served as a counsellor outside the government. The rulers' links with the Soviet Russian government grew tighter and the issue of the borders seemed to reduce Béla Kun's morale. He appeared to have acquiesced to the conception of a Bolshevik bloc formed by the Russian, German and Hungarian republics.

On the military side, it is difficult to know the organisation of the Hungarian Army and it is scarcely possible to work out its composition on the eve of the Romanian aggression. The "Volunteer Army of the Hungarian People's Republic" was to consist of six divisions, each of three mixed brigades, each consisting of one infantry regiment, one artillery regiment of three groups (one field, one howitzer and one heavy) and one division¹ of cavalry (two squadrons).

The only non-brigaded elements were one company of divisional engineers and one company of telegraphists. On top of this the Székely elements (sometimes titled the Transylvanian Brigade or Division) consisted of a mix of 9 battalions of former regiments (22nd, 23rd and 24th Honved, 2nd, 31st, 50th, 51st, 62nd and 82nd KuK) plus the 2nd and 9th Hussars.

Added to these Transylvanian elements, the "Danube Guard", formed from marines, seems to have had some value.

Outside these forces officially recognised by the Entente, Károlyi had kept, temporarily, a certain number of battalions from former regiments (it seems 17 battalions).

One obtains therefore a total of about 28,000 men and 240 machine-guns. But apart from these units, whose existence was admitted by the Hungarian government, there were a certain number of units which it tried to hide (in particular, the 2nd Honved between the Danube and the Tisza and the 6th Honved in the Feherkörös/Crişu Alb valley).

In total, in contact with the Romanian Army, there were:

- units of the former Imperial Army;
- units of the "Volunteer Army of the Hungarian People's Republic";
- units of Communists regulars (the 1st International Regiment, for example);
- revolutionary bands.

Recruitment for the Communist army seems to have given terrible results: the sane elements, those who engaged through patriotism, had been quickly disappointed by the exclusively Communist orientation which Béla Kun's government took.

The jobless, who engaged to pillage, were disappointed to find that a degree of discipline was imposed on them. Recruitment gave hardly more than 15,000 men.

Béla Kun was also expecting the assistance that would be provided by the return of the Bolshevik Hungarian ex-POWs from Russia. A fantastic number of these prisoners (around 100,000) were announced as arriving via Galicia. Well if, thanks to the complicity of the Danish Red Cross, small packets of prisoners were sent via Mukachëvo and Debrecen, their number does not appear to have exceeded 3,000. Only a small part of them agreed to enter the Red Army. Thus it was not from that side that Béla Kun could expect any useful help.

The Romanian attack appears to have surprised the Hungarian Army fully occupied with reorganisation, even perhaps in a state of complete disorganisation.

An passionate appeal from the People's Commissar for War, pleading that "all military employees on a monthly wage, all career NCOs, all doctors, enlist in the Red Army and present themselves to the appropriate corps without delay" seemed to be a witness to the lack of military organisation. Thus there was some drafting to increase the ranks of the Red Army.

At the end of April the efforts of the Hungarian Communists to join up with the [Russian] Bolsheviks were contained. The junction of the Czechoslovakian and Romanian armies filled the hole around Mukachëvo and the occupation of the Tisza reinforced the barrier between the two homes of Communism. In the west Béla Kun ran into the opposition of the Austrians. To the south and east he faced the Allied menace.

But the announcement of the Romanian advance and the disintegration of the Hungarian forces caused considerable turmoil in Budapest and non-occupied Hungary.

Not knowing the intentions of the Allied troops, the Communists feared that the Romanian advance was aimed to end at Budapest and that its goal was to overthrow the Kun government. Its authority decreased, not because the opposition was more menacing – it had no cohesion – but because of the disarray among the ranks of their own partisans.

The members of the government prepared to flee: 28 planes were equipped at the aviation base of *Mátyásföld* to take them to Moscow along with the gold and jewels seized in Budapest, or taken to that town by the workers' councils which flooded into the capital.

¹ I'm picking this is actually a battalion or demi-regiment, with the Hungarians using a word like the Russian *divizion*, which has been poorly translated.



The Communist government launched proclamations to raise the morale of the people and the Army. Böhm, People's Commissar for War, was named Commander-in-Chief of Hungarian forces to the east of the Tisza.

During this time, the exactions and humiliations by the Communists intensified. Congregations were chased away, the churches transformed into cinemas or Communist meeting places. The Red Guards looted as they retired. The misery grew in Budapest and food became scarcer. The asylums filled up and suicides became numerous.

The part of the population of moderate tendencies and keen to see order and calm restored were all – well off workers included – waiting for French intervention.

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Chapter VII

Regrouping by the Belligerents on Both Sides of the Tisza

Information supplied by a Romanian Army liaison officer stated that no Romanian troops were across the Tisza on 10 May, neither at Szolnok nor the south. The movement of the 18th ID, which had been in reserve for the southern group and was to replace the 1st and 2nd Light IDs, had commenced and would be finished in three days. At the end of the movement, the command post of the 18th ID would be set up in Gyomaendrőd, the 45th IB to the south, the 46th to the north, the 1st LID would assemble in the Békéscsaba region and the 2nd LID around Oradea.

The 8th ID, retired from the front, was regrouped further north and the 7th ID extended its front up to Fegyvernek.

As concerns the Hungarian Army, information from Budapest confirmed that the Reds were assembling more and more men in Kecskemét, Kiskunfélegyháza and Kistelek. It seems that the Red Army tended more and more to adopt the organisation of the former régime. The irregular elements were dissolved and wages re-established. The War Council had hundreds of men shot for indiscipline. The taking back of control was affirmed on all occasions.

At Szeged our [French] forward posts arrested people carrying Bolshevik tracts translated into French and Croat. A patrol of Red Guards, having seen the arrest, fired on our men, who returned fire.

* * *

Béla Kun Looks to Gain Time

Despairing of saving the situation of the Budapest Communist government, which was compromised on one side by the hostility of a large part of the Hungarian population, even workers, and by the Romanian invasion, and on the other side by the failure of the celebrations of 1 May, which were meant to be the signal for Communist revolutions in Europe, Béla Kun thought about capitulating.

Yet on 10 May the Communists were still in power. The Romanians, having arrived at the Tisza, were establishing themselves thoroughly, sorting out bridgehead to the west. The Red troops were resisting them desperately, particularly in the Szolnok area.

But the indiscipline of the troops and the their lack of cadres [officers] would not allow them to hold for long. However, thanks to their resistance, Béla Kun hoped to win enough time necessary to obtain the intervention of the Entente. He looked, to this end, to support the members of the American commission, then in Budapest – threatening, in the case of further Romanian advance, to preach resistance to the end and to close his eyes to the probable massacre of bourgeois by the Red Guards.

The intervention of the Entente was indeed necessary for him and his party if they were to avoid the severe repression that otherwise could not fail to follow, as much from his political opponents as from the Romanians.

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Reduction of Serbian Forces between the Danube and the Tisza

{The French allow the Serbians to withdraw forces from the Hungarian border – Italy and Bulgaria are more threatening.}

* * *

Modifications to the Terms of the Occupation of the Banat

{Changes made so that Hungarian local rule in the Banat is not to be allowed to assist the Soviet Hungarians.}

* * *

The Romanians Ask to be Allowed to Enter Arad

{The Romanians started occupying Arad on 17 May, despite strong French objection.}

[The following appears to be verbatim from a report, and is therefore in the present tense]



At the same time, all information is agreed that the Bolshevik Hungarians are putting their forces in order, now estimated at about 150,000 men. If the amount of cavalry and artillery is weak, as well as the number of shells, the quantity of machine-guns will be quite high. Rumours circulate of an attack on Szeged and large preparations are being made in the Kecskemét–Kistelek region for an attack, with the arrival of German and Russian Bolshevik reinforcements as well as MG armoured cars. Some planes are also stationed there.

Along with this, reinforcements are being put in place in front of our elements, the Reds expecting an offensive to be launched by us between 21 and 24 May.

Béla Kun continues to hold power in Budapest.

* * *

The [French] Army of Hungary Destined to be Transported to Bulgaria

{Plans to move the French. Notes about the situation on the Dneestr.}

* * *

The Departure of the [French] Army of Hungary Cancelled

{The plans are abandoned.}

On the Czechoslovak–Romanian front, the Czechs were attacked by the Hungarians on 21 May at Miskolc, abandoned the field and retired to a line Sajószentpéter–Szikszó. But, by a counter-attack made on the 23rd in liaison with Romanian forces, the front was reported to be from *Sajóiskaljo* to Girincs. On the Romanian front a detachment of Hungarian marines succeeded on the 23rd in crossing the Tisza at Szolnok but were thrown back to the right bank. Two other attempts were made to force the river on the same day, at Tiszadob and Tiszalök but both ended unsuccessfully.

On the French front, during the night of 26/27 May, on three occasions Hungarian patrols advanced towards the line in front of the Varga farm, were discovered, and retired under LMG fire.

* * *

The Romanians Request the Use of the Town of Szeged.

The Romanian command, after a pause needed to sort its troops out and relieve the tired units, wanted to move forward again. To this aim and also, so it stated, in order to disengage the Czech troops, it enquired of the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies of the Orient the conditions under which it would be possible to pass troops and supplies via Szeged and to transport the 1st ID into the Arad–Makó zone by the rail-line Orşova–Lugoj–Timișoara–Arad. Wanting to maintain the integrity of the Franco-Serb zone the Commander-in-Chief replied negatively. However, he referred the matter to Paris, stating that he could not see any inconvenience with passage via Szeged on the condition that the French troops continued to occupy the town so as to avoid incidents such as those in Arad. Concerning the use of the railway, he feared that this would be interpreted by the Serbs as the prelude to a Romanian occupation of the Banat.

He stressed, however, that the intended Romanian operations against the Hungarians would prevent them from occupying the Dneestr front, slowing the transport of the [Allied] Army of the Danube to Bulgaria.

{Paragraphs concerning problems with French troops in Serbia.}

* * *

Incidents in Arad

{Serbs and Romanians causing trouble about the disputed town.}

In the sector of the 18th Transylvanian ID, the Reds tried to cross the Tisza at Veszeny (16 km south of Szolnok) during the night of 3/4 June and also at Tiszavárkony (12 km south of Szolnok) but were repelled.

* * *

The Hungarian Authorities in the Banat Relieved by the Romanians

{Serbs and Romanians causing trouble about the disputed province.}

* * *

Political Situation in Hungary in May 1919

Béla Kun's government seemed, in the last days of May, to have regained some vigour and confidence with the momentary halt of the Romanians and some local successes by the Red Army.

But the situation remained extremely precarious. Béla Kun had no confidence in his army: indiscipline was growing and the Red soldiers thought only about loot. A general mobilisation of all workers had been decreed but results were poor. It was necessary to enrol workers by force.



Lenin's radio messages had promised military help to the Hungarian Republic and he had announced the imminent invasion of Bessarabia, but Béla Kun seems to have placed little faith on this intervention, which needed to be very powerful and rapid to be useful.¹

To the west, the Vienna government had broken relations with Budapest on 1 May, and the Kun government now found itself completely isolated from the exterior while facing an extremely difficult situation in the interior.

The rural population was decidedly anti-Bolshevik. The opposition in Budapest grew larger and larger but dared not act. Kun showed a certain degree of moderation with regard to the bourgeoisie – who had suffered more than the rest under the nationalisation of goods, decreed to meet the cost of public expenses – but was not able to prevent the numerous exactions made by the Red Guards.

To realise his aim to restore order he was forced to make large concessions to the opposition and seriously retard the application of the Communist program. Thus the papers and speeches stated that the government was disposed to respect the small and medium proprietor and it would punish, with all its energy, all looting, abusive requisitions and disorder.

But this progress of Communist power was only on the surface, because the Republic of Hungarian Soviets continued to struggle with unsolvable economic difficulties. All the industrial establishments were shut. Despite Kun's gains the peasants continued to hide their corn and famine grew, above all in Budapest.

Thus the concessions forced onto the Soviet government were unable to calm the irritation directed at it – which grew continually but was incapable at that time of manifesting itself successfully. This inability was due to divisions in the opposition parties, selfishness and general apathy.

* * *

Increase in Effective Strengths in the [French] Army of Hungary

{The arrival of some reinforcements and the reorganisation of French forces required.}

* * *

Chapter VIII

Budapest Looks for Support from Soviet Russia and Germany

The situation in Budapest was dramatic. While it appeared that the launching of an Allied offensive, by itself, would be sufficient to lead to the fall of the Hungarian Communist government, the Peace Conference [Versailles] refused to authorise a march onto the capital, requested by the Romanians, to the great despair of the majority of the Hungarian population in Budapest.

A curious thing: the Romanian offensive did not create any “[national] holy bond of unity” around the government. Béla Kun's proclamations left the people undecided between two evils: Romanian occupation or the Bolshevik régime. The opposition parties themselves did not know whether to be drawn into the Bolshevik camp by the panic provoked by the Romanian advance. One of them, connected to Archduke Josef, dreamed of returning the Hapsburgs and claimed to dispose of two divisions, but actually was counting primarily on the Entente to assist its aspirations. The other, born from a fusion of the Agrarian Party, Advanced Socialist Party, Peasant Party, Democratic Party, Saxon Party and Independent '48 Party, proposed the immediate overthrow of the Bolshevik régime but, completely divided on the problem of the future government, lacked any cohesion.

At the end of the Romanian offensive, the “Anti-Bolshevik Party” and the “Party of Order” had both shown their impotence. The Communists were no less worried. Predicting an imminent occupation of the capital, they manoeuvred to insure their line of retreat, with all their efforts tending to assure [personal and party] immunity.

At one time they even thought of abdicating but the halt of the Romanian offensive reassured them and they abandoned the idea.

In the interior they worked to profit from the respite given them to increase the number of their supporters by inaugurating a relatively mild set of policies and to speed up the organisation of their military system.

To the exterior they intensified their propaganda among the populations of the Entente countries, so as to set up Bolshevik cells and create political agitation favourable to popular uprisings. Well supplied with money, the product of the confiscations from the banks and fake French and English notes printed in Budapest, their emissaries spread revolutionary tracts widely. There were many occasions when such agents were arrested when they tried to cross French lines.

They also tried to make contact with view to a military union with Soviet Russia and Germany.

But the critical military situation of Trotsky's army and the closing of the access corridor via Mukachëvo when the Romanians and Czechs effected their link, prohibited any hope of military co-operation and serious support from Lenin.

¹ Lenin did in fact order quite a substantial invasion of Bessarabia, but the leader of the major Soviet unit (the delightful Ataman Gregoriev) first delayed its deployment and then mutinied. By the time the Soviet Russians had sorted the mess out it was too late.



In Germany, on the other hand, it did not seem impossible that the country would rise up against the severe conditions imposed by the peace and discard Scheidemann, Noske and the Weimar Assembly in order to establish a dictatorship of the proletariat. Austria might perhaps also associate itself with the movement, because the spread of hunger and serious unemployment were already leading to a large and serious discontentment in the working classes.

The Entente would then no longer be able to oppose “the red flame rising in the east” by force.

These intrigues were, moreover, favoured by Italy: curiously, an Italian mission had remained in Budapest after the departure of the other Allied missions. Made up of Prince Borghese, Prince Pinatelli and Colonel Romanelli, it reassured the Communist government, which feared Entente intervention, and facilitated its communications, its propaganda and its food supply.

The aim of the Italian policy was to profit from a possible refusal by Germany to sign the Peace Treaty to attack an encircled Serbia and seize coveted territory [especially Trieste].

On 15 June, bolstered by this support and the inconceivable passivity of the opposition, Béla Kun’s power was considerably stronger. Some insignificant tentative attempts at counter-revolution, led without preparation or conviction, were snuffed out with ease.

The Communist army was transformed. It was sorted out into divisions and now numbered 110,000 men, of whom 66,000 were combatants. Discipline was re-established. A large stock of armaments, material and munitions were located and assembled.

This organisation was to permit the Communists, until then reduced to defending, to take the offensive on the Czech front.

* * *

The Conflict with Czechoslovakia

The first goal of the Communist government, in undertaking operations on the Czech front, seems to have been firstly to recover the mining region of Salgótarján, the possession of which was indispensable to the economic life of Hungary and from which it derived the support of the workers.

After the initial success, and really only at that moment, there was thought of possibly breaking the link between the Romanian and Czech forces, and thus establishing to the north of Chop and Mukachëvo a link with the Ukraine and Soviet Russia.

A spreading separatist movement in Czechoslovakia acted to assist this operation, with the complicity of the Italian General Piccioni, commanding part of the Czech forces.

On 31 May 1919 the Hungarian troops repulsed the Czech left wing, throwing them back across the Ipel’ River. In the centre they reached the Rimava River [near Ózd]; the right wing reoccupied Miskolc and crossed the Sajó. The front went via the Ipel’, Balassagyarmat, *Ujfalú*,¹ *Gacs*, *Famosi*, Bátka [Cz], *Kebmer*,² Monok and *Berecs*.³ Heading in two directions towards *Kremits-Neusohl*⁴ and Prešov, the Magyar push forced the Czech troops to retreat over the whole front. The Czechs – lacking ammunition, worked at by Bolshevik propaganda, harassed by a civil population uprising and broken up by the Italian defection of General Piccioni’s troops – were cut in two on the Hernád River.

To the east the [Czech] Carpathian Detachment, commanded by General Destremeau, held the line of the *Cernavada* [Latorica?] from *Zavajka*⁵ to Velké Kapušany in liaison with the Romanians.

To the west the bulk of the Czech forces established themselves on a line Lipany (25 km NW of Prešov), *Marhitfulva*, *Nagyveszeres*, *Alsajo*, *Neusohl*,⁶ Nová Baňa.

Relying on the rebels, the Hungarian army occupied the region between the two lines. On 5 June the Hungarian Communists were at Košice, two days later they entered Prešov and pushed up to the border with Galicia.

General Destremeau was only able to communicate by plane with the Mittelhauser group. The Communist link with the Ukraine was on the point of being realised.

On 7 June the Hungarians, moving north of Košice, were thrown from that town by a counter-attack. General Pelle was named Generalissimo of the Czech Army. A state of siege was proclaimed throughout the whole Republic.

* * *

¹ Likely Somoskőújfalu, just north of Salgótarján – or possibly Sagújfalu village which is just to the SW.

² Likely a typo for Kelemér.

³ Perhaps Bekecs, below Monok, on the Tisza.

⁴ I’m picking this is the Kremnica (Ger =Kremnitz) and Zvolen (Ger = Altsohl) region of Czechoslovakia.

⁵ Svalyava?

⁶ All deep in modern Slovakia it would seem.



The Entente's Ultimatum to Hungary and the Project to Occupy the Whole Country

But the Entente governments were concerned by the Czech's reverses. By a radiotelegram of 7 June, at 2200 hours, it ordered the Hungarian government to cease, without delay, its attacks on the Czechs or otherwise the Allied governments would have recourse to extreme measures. A response to the ultimatum was sought within 48 hours.

If the Hungarians rejected the ultimatum, the Allied governments envisaged a concentric offensive with the intention of occupying Hungary – using the forces placed under the overall command of the general commanding the Allied Armies of the Orient.

- a. A Serb ID directly on Budapest;
- b. The Romanian Army of Transylvania would free, as quickly as possible, the Czechs by acting against the rear of the Hungarian forces on the northern front and then afterwards head west;
- c. The French [French] Army of Hungary would assure the junction of the Romanian and Serb armies;

No offensive movement was to be executed without an order from the Supreme Council of the Allied Powers.

In consequence, the Army of Hungary received orders to prepare to cross the Tisza in the Szeged region for an eventual march and supply axis of Szeged–Kecskemét–Budapest.

At the same time, the commander of the Allied Armies of the Orient asked for a minimum of 4 Romanian infantry divisions and one infantry and one cavalry division from the Serbs for this operation.

Besides, the Army of Hungary should receive the 3rd RTA, expected from France, as reinforcements.

Faced with the Entente's ultimatum, Béla Kun conceded and ordered the evacuation of the occupied territories. His prestige and authority took a mortal blow.

The workers were disappointed and the food situation became more and more agonising. The country started to weary of the régime which, in three months, had led it to ruin.

The opposition parties regained hope. Serious rioting broke out, especially in the Kalocsa–Dunaföldvár region on 24 June, but the opposition's lack of direction made suppression easy. In Budapest, on the same day, the students of the Ludovika Military Academy initially formed the spearhead of 6,000 workers but, at the last moment, they were abandoned. The cadets, supported by three monitors, found themselves facing the Reds alone. They were killed to the last man and their officers hung.

The Székely Division, suspected of wishing to aid the counter-revolutionaries, was sent from Budapest and reassembled in the Gödöllő region.

It did seem that only a single organisation, based outside the territories occupied by the Soviets, would permit the anti-Communist parties to link, unite, specify a common program and arm, and to thereby form a serious and coherent force.

With this aim the "Government of Szeged" was proposed.

* * *

Creation of the Szeged Government

{The counter-revolution unites. On 6 May a provisional government was formed, initially under the presidency of Count Károlyi (cousin of the former head of the government) and then Abraham. It recruited troops until a division was formed, with cadres for another. It looked as if the Reds were heading towards Szeged, which would have dragged the French in, but they turned to attack the Romanians first.}

* * *

{Two sections dealing with French troop movements in the Szeged area and the visit of the Serbian regent.}

* * *

Defensive Plan of the [French] Army of Hungary

{The orders of the Commander-in-Chief and the plans for the defence of the Szeged area}

Some information – coming from the military mission in Vienna and retransmitted by the Minister of War to the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies of the Orient – gave details of the projected works, already started on the east of the Danube, planned by the Hungarians for the defence of Budapest.

According to the information a considerable number of men would be necessary to hold the defensive line intended (47 battalions, approximately 350 machine-guns and 60 artillery batteries), which could only be obtained by using a certain number of the army's field divisions and almost all the available artillery.

This line of defence was to be made up of a trench line and strongpoints with machine-guns, protected by lines of barbed wire. It was estimated that the work would take three or four weeks.



[See Map 8]

* * *

{Five sections dealing mostly with the Banat. The Supreme Council of the Allied Powers had chosen the dividing line and there was much coming and going as the various armies moved in and out of various zones – and much ill-will too.}

* * *

Positions of Hungarian Troops facing the [French] Army of Hungary

From information gathered by the [French] 76th ID one can see at least roughly how the Hungarian troops were organised on 10 July.

In front of the 76th ID the Red 4th ID had occupied the Kistelek region. A battalion of “Grenzschutz-Kommando” was stationed at Szatymaz. The rail line from Szatymaz to Sándorfalva was solidly held.

The order of battle appeared to be:

1st Army Corps (HQ Cegléd):
– 2nd ID at Kecskemét;
– 6th ID at Újszász;
– 7th ID at Szolnok.

2nd Army Corps (HQ Siófok¹):
– 1st ID at Szikszó;
– 5th ID at Putnok;
– 2nd and 3rd IB at Sátoraljaújhely.

4th Army Corps (HQ Budapest):
– 4th ID at Kistelek;
– 3rd ID at *Petsag*;
– 20th IB at Salgótarján.

The reinforcement of the region between the Danube and the Tisza seemed to correspond to a preparation for action against the Romanians, leaving from Tokaj–Szolnok, and planned for around 16 July.

The 4th ID remained Franco-Serbian line, so as to hold that front if required.

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Morale and Material State of the [French] Army of Hungary on 28 July 1919

{A full report on the state of the French army.}

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Chapter IX

Political Situation in Budapest and the General Organisation of the Red Army in June 1919

While the Serbs and Romanians were watching each other in the Banat, the situation for the Hungarian Communists grew clearly better during June, thanks to Béla Kun’s political skill. From a military point of view he succeeded in putting the army in order and, above all, instilled in the people – and particularly in the workers – a patriotic strand while at the same time stirring up their Communist zeal.

From an interior political viewpoint, he sought to make the régime acceptable to the majority of Hungarians, by softening the application of some Communist principles. The first consequence of this pliable policy was the success against the Czechs, a success which particularly increased the popularity of the dictator, even though he had been forced to comply with the Entente’s ultimatum. This popularity allowed him to resist the assaults of his principal opponents, the extremists, who reproached him for his softness towards the bourgeoisie.

However, this apparent gain in favour was only on the surface and only really manifested itself in the ranks of the Army (and then not in all units) and in the big towns, particularly Budapest.

In their hearts the peasants remained attached to the preceding régime. The workers even, while clamouring for a liberal and democratic régime, were basically Socialists and not Communists.

However, the relationship that Kun had succeeded in gaining with the Entente gave him more strength with the Hungarians to accentuate the propaganda which he pursued with a feverish activity following the orders given by Lenin. The relationship with the Soviets in Moscow continued to be very close.

¹ Perhaps an error, since the only Siófok I can find is in entirely the wrong place.



He also maintained friendly relations with the Italians, whose political actions in Hungary continued daily to foil, in an insidious manner, the Entente's general policies for eastern Europe, to the profit of their immediate interest.

On the military front the Béla Kun government, after a less than fruitful attempt at a Communist army, returned to the former army organisation.

Unit commands were given to military commanders. Political commissars, who had been kept beside the commanders of large units, were denied all influence in the conduct of operations. The officers were, moreover, no longer elected by their men but nominated by their superiors after an exam submitted to a commission.

Little by little the army organisation grew more exact. It was divided into corps, infantry divisions, brigades, regiments, battalions and companies. The composition of these units was still variable but they seemed to be unified in tending towards what it had been in the old Austro-Hungarian army. The workers' units were placed in the divisions. As for the Red Guards, they were increasingly stationed for police activities or used as guards in quiet sectors.

The morale of the troops appears to have grown. Each day discipline was reinforced. The officers regained their rank insignia and a court-martial was instituted in each regiment. There were no longer soviets in the units.

But for all that, Kun was not absolutely sure of his army. The officers of the old régime, to who it had been necessary to appeal, had a considerable influence in it despite the political commissars. Such an army could not remain inactive without risking becoming a danger to the government itself. This is perhaps one of the reasons which pushed Kun into the offensive on the Tisza. The operations against the Czechs had indeed finished by the last days of June and on 3 July, forced by the Entente, the Red Army had evacuated the conquered territory. Since then Kun had not stopped protesting, in his radio messages to Paris, against the ill-will of the Czechs and, above all, about the continuing presence of Romanian troops on the left bank of the Tisza – in contempt of the formal promises of the [Peace] Conference. Therefore, in launching an attack against them, on 20 July, he telegraphed the Conference that his aim was solely to force the Romanians to submit to the Allies' decisions.

* * *

Position of Hungarian and Romanian Forces between the Danube and the Tisza

In the second half of July, according to information coming from the [French] 76th ID, the situation of the Communist Hungarian forces between the Danube and the Tisza was the following:

A. Facing the [French] Army of Hungary:

- In the line, units of the 1st Army Corps, HQ Cegléd, apparently the 2nd ID, HQ Kecskemét, made up of:
- 30th Brigade (30th IR and 68th IR);
 - 68th Brigade (15th IR and 38th IR).

(Some detachments of this division were sent towards the end of June to the Czech front, before the armistice between Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Still, there was reason to suppose that the units had taken their former places once the armistice was signed.)

This division probably had its front from Kalocsa to Csongrád.

Effectives: 143 officers, 6,000 men.

In reserve:

- 4th ID (6th IR, 14th IR, 33rd IR, 2nd IR and 22nd IR) said to be concentrated in the Kistelek–Kecskemét area.
- 6th ID (46th IR, 31st IR, 33rd IR and 101st IR) probably in the region southeast of Budapest (unconfirmed).

B. Facing the Romanian Army:

- 7th ID, HQ Szolnok, (1st IR, 4th Bihar, Marine Detachment) set up from Csongrád to Kisköre.

C. West of the Danube

- 1st ID
- 5th ID

As for the Romanian forces, they were aligned, as we have seen previously, in two groups:

The northern group, HQ Debrecen:

- 16th Transylvanian ID, reinforced by the 2nd Light ID in the front line;
- 1st ID, around Carei, and the 2nd CD in reserve.

The southern group, HQ Oradea:

- 18th Transylvanian ID, HQ Gyomaendrőd, in the first line along a front of 120 km;
- 1st Light ID, HQ Békéscsaba, and the 1st CD, around Salonta, in reserve.



On this front the Romanian army had three air squadrons, respectively at Békéscsaba, Oradea and Debrecen:

- Békéscsaba squadron ... 1 plane only available
- Oradea squadron ... no planes available
- Debrecen squadron ... 2 planes, with motors requiring repair. To receive 5 Breguets.

To face this largely non-existent aviation, the Bolsheviks had 12 planes, performing reconnaissance, strafing and bombing – and attacking the Romanian planes every time they met.

* * *

Hungarian Plans for the Attack

Some Hungarian political leaders arrived in Ceglád on the 19th, confirming the rumours of an imminent attack of the Hungarian Red Army against the Romanians on the Tisza.

According to some of these people, Vago, Commissar of the People and commander of the 1st Army Corps, had explained the plan of attack to a meeting of superior officers on 15 July.

- the 1st ID was to cross the Tisza around Tokaj, and march on Carei;
- the 2nd Brigade (Székelys) was to cross the Tisza at Tiszalök, and march on Debrecen;
- the 6th ID was to attack to the north of Szolnok, the 5th ID to the south;
- the 3rd ID, reinforced by the artillery of the 8th ID, was to attack in two columns, the weaker towards Mindszent and the other, stronger, on around Csongrád.

The mission of the 4th ID, facing Szeged, was to hold the Franco-Serb front so as to cover the right flank of the projected attack.

Information received put the start of the attack at 20 July, or the night of 20/21 July.

It was not impossible, however, that a Bolshevik attack would include as one of its objectives Szeged, site of the “Provisional Government”, and whose fall would give a great morale effect. It seemed likely then, as certain information appeared to indicate, that the Hungarians were seeking to take Szeged by outflanking it, either by an attack on the Romanians or – more probable – by an attack on the front of the 17th Colonial ID and the Serbs.

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Measures Taken by the Commander of the [French] Army of Hungary

{French defensive planning.}

* * *

Troop Movements

{French movements. Arad left to Romanians.}

According to the latest information, arriving 18 July, the movement to concentrate Bolshevik troops in the Kistelek and Szatymaz region appeared to have finished. On the contrary, the Kiskunmajsa region was the site of movements which appeared to be troops being relieved. The Hungarian attack, concentrated between the Tisza and the Danube had as its objective the line Arad–Oradea–East of Debrecen.

An aerial reconnaissance made on the morning of 19 July showed marked animation in the stations of Kistelek and Csongrád as well as on the rail lines. Barges were moving on the Tisza and a bridge had been built in the last location.

The Romanians appeared to have evacuated the eastern bank of the Tisza.

On 18 July a French plane, having been shot at from Kistelek where an artillery battery had stopped, replied by machine-gunning the column.

Faced with the Hungarian preparations for the attack, the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies of the Orient ordered the commander of the [French] Army of Hungary – in the case of being subject of a Red offensive – “to maintain the integrity of the front, to intervene with fire every time you are attacked by cannon or rifle and to hold ready to cross to the offensive at the first signal”. He also asked that the aviation remain very active and make numerous reconnaissance flights to keep informed, and to fight if needed. He confirmed that the orders of the previous day had been referred to Paris.

Transmitting these orders to the divisional generals, the commander of the Army of Hungary told the commander of the 76th ID to particularly watch his right and keep informed of the state of the Romanian division, with which he was to keep a very close liaison.

The aviation was ordered to only fire if it was attacked during the course of its reconnaissance flights.

* * *



The Hungarian Attack on the Romanian Front

By ceding to the 8 June ultimatum of the Allies, and by ordering the evacuation of the territory occupied by the Red Army in Czechoslovakia, the Communist government had counted on recovering, in exchange, some of the territory occupied by the Romanians east of the Tisza.

To calm the discontent provoked in the Army by the uselessness of its sacrifices on the Czech front, it had even gone so far as to openly proclaim that if the Romanian troops do not agree to retire back to the line Debrecen–Oradea, they would be forced to do so by armed means.

A new military operation also seemed necessary to the Budapest government, where the extremist elements had replaced the ministers suspected of moderation, in order to reaffirm its authority and rally the nationalist [patriotic] parties around it.

The invasion of the rich plains to the east of the Tisza where, despite the Romanian requisitions, there was still plenty of cattle and where the wheat harvest was coming, also seemed an excellent way to improve the food situation.

The Army had perfected its organisation. It now it had nine divisions grouped into Corps. But its material was more powerful and discipline had been energetically re-established, its morale showed a lack of cohesion and the loyalty of certain units, commanded by officers of the former Imperial army, was very doubtful with regards to the ruling régime. The operation, nevertheless, appeared easy and the first successes assured that the hesitant went along.

On 20 July, after a serious enough artillery preparation forward of the crossing points, the Hungarian attack was launched:

– 2nd ID, in the south, on Mindszent–Csongrád;

– 6th ID and 7th ID in the centre on Szolnok, supported to the north by elements of the 1st ID and 5th ID.

The main effort was made in the centre, with a simple diversion made to the north at Adábszalók. In the south, the portions which crossed the Tisza only pushed small units to the east from Mindszent, to Szarvas and to Hödmezővásárhely.

Facing the Hungarian attack, the front of the Romanian 18th ID, much too large considering its size, collapsed and had to give ground and abandon the right bank of the Tisza.

On the 21st the Reds occupied the line Hödmezővásárhely–Orosháza and were pushing their scouting cavalry units 8 km south of this line. The Romanians were still on the Mureş with units on the outskirts north of Makó (where the French were in liaison with them), Apátfalva and Nagylak.

[See Map 10]

* * *

Creation by the [French] Army of Hungary of a Detachment for Liaison with the Romanian Army

With the Hungarian advance, the fall of Mindszent and Hödmezővásárhely and the retirement of the Romanian left wing towards Makó, the commander of the Army of Hungary was, quite rightly, concerned by the turn of events and for his liaison with the Romanian troops. On 20 July he decided to create a liaison detachment under the orders of General de Gondrecourt, composed of the cavalry brigade (less the divisional squadrons), the [some?] field and mountain artillery sections and the divisional depot of the 76th ID.

The detachment's mission was to make contact with the units of the Romanian left, to inform the command of the situation of those units and the Red advance, to watch the Mureş River line between Cenad (inclusive), the bridge at Apátfalva and Deszk (exclusive) working in liaison with the 76th ID. It was also to prevent the enemy from crossing the river between those two points.

A battalion of the 17th Colonial ID was held ready to embark, if circumstances demanded it, from 1000 hours on the 21st, from Novi Kneževac destined for Kiszombor, where it would be eventually at the disposition of General de Gondrecourt. He was meant to be in place by no later than 1200 hours on the 21st.

In fact, thanks to the shortage of transport, the detachment only made it to its post at 1200 hours on the 22nd.

In any event, the rapidity of the Romanian reaction by then had stopped the Red advance.

The units available to the 1st Light ID (a brigade) took over the southern sector of the 18th ID from Algyó¹ to the north of Szarvas, and pushed up the Tisza.

The 18th ID was reinforced by the 6th Light IR and by a dismounted cavalry battalion from the 1st CD.

A mass of manoeuvre, formed from the 1st ID, 6th ID and 2nd CD, was concentrated in the Karcag–Püspökladány–Báránd region.

¹ A small village just NNE of Szeged on the Tisza, so basically as far south as possible without entering the French zone.



The 7th ID, recalled from Bukovina, was in transit.

The intention of the Romanian command was to resist on their current positions until the Hungarian reserves had been engaged to the east of the Tisza, then counter-attack in a NE to SW direction between the Tisza and Berettyóúfalu.¹

On the 23rd Hödmezővásárhely, Orosháza and Mindszent were reoccupied. At the end of the day, the Romanians held Abádszalók, Szarvas, Mindszent and the eastern exit point on the Tisza of the pontoon bridge.

The Romanian advance plunged the Serbs into concern. Two telegrams from Voivode Michich to the commander of the [French] Army of Hungary on 24 July showed their rancour at the Romanian success.

{Serbian complaints.}

On the morning of the 25th, the Romanians attacked and retook Szentes. On this day the front ran, in the centre, by Fegyvernek (in Romanian hands), Kisújszállás, Túrkeve, Mezőtúr, Kunszentmárton (all Hungarian). To the north the Hungarians were able to establish a pair of bridgeheads at Tiszafüred and Tokaj.

Under the continuing Romanian push the Hungarians flowed back and, at the end of the day, the line went along the Tisza from Algyő to the confluence of the Kőrös river (with the exception of exit point of the Szentes bridge, still held by Hungarian troops) to Kunszentmárton and Mezőtúr. But the course of the Berettyó and Kisújszállás and Kunhegyes were still in Hungarian hands.

At the GHQ of the Army of Hungary tension grew. Official information from Paris to General de Lobit seemed to say that the Peace Conference had decided that the Allied armies were to march on Budapest. The commander of the Army queried this with the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies of the Orient and added that the Serb GHQ had twice asked of him if he had instructions on the matter.

But the Commander-in-Chief calmed the impatience: "Paris has asked the Serbs and Romanians what effectives could be supplied by them to the front line in case such a march on Budapest becomes necessary. The Army of Hungary would equally participate in such an operation. But these are only plans and, at present there are no orders for their execution."

To the north the Hungarian forces which had crossed the Tisza at Tiszafüred were thrown back to the west bank by the Romanians.

At Tokaj the Hungarians managed to hold their bridgehead on the eastern side.

During the morning of the 27th, the Hungarians were chased back almost entirely onto the western bank, only keeping two bridgeheads: one between *Beckzed*² and Tiszaezlár (facing Tokaj) and the other between Tiszaföldvár and Csongrád.

{The French reorganise to reflect the new situation.}

* * *

Rapidity and Power of the Romanian Counter-attack

Rout of the Hungarian Army

Continuing to march forward, by 30 July the Romanians had reached, in the Tiszalök sector, a point 2 km north of Tiszaezlár, Tiszadada and Taktakenéz. In the Fegyvernek sector, the front ran via Tiszasüly, *Simonyi Tn*, *Adler Tn*, 2 km east of Besenyszög, Szóró, 3 km west of *O Balla*.

On 1 August they occupied Mezőkövesd, Füzesabony, Jászapáti, Jászberény, Tápiószele, *Rekas*, Szolnok. Cavalry patrols advanced to within 12 km of Budapest. On 2 August they entered Cegléd. Algyő and Sándorfalva were evacuated by the Hungarians.

The Red Army was in full rout. Its units, demoralised, refused to fight.

Thus at Cegléd a battalion mutinied and the soldiers broke their weapons. In the village of *Cylos* the 1st and 3rd Battalions of the 46th IR also revolted. At Kistelek on Sunday 27 July, the Red soldiers had a meeting and cheered the bourgeoisie. As soon as the Romanians launched their forward guards to the west of the river, the Communist forces broke up.

The whole Hungarian 1st ID surrendered at Abaújszántó. The general commanding the 3rd ID surrendered at Jászberény with three battalions and four batteries. The rest of the army fled in disorder, discarding their uniforms in favour of civilian clothes, terrorising the countryside and looting.

Crossing the Tisza at Fegyvernek and Tiszalök, the Romanians watched the stampede of the Communist army and saw, for the second time, the road to Budapest open before them.

This time the Entente allowed them to take it.

¹ The sense is not clear, it may mean between the Tisza and the Berettyó River, but this seems to amount to the same thing.

² I would guess Tiszabercel, since this is in the right place to make Rakamaz the centre of the bridgehead.



On 4 August 1919, under the command of Generals Mardaescu and Holban, the Romanian troops entered the Hungarian capital.

The Romanian GHQ officially announced that it had captured five Hungarian divisions. In fact they did not have more than 7–8,000 prisoners. The Hungarian army, in which the majority of officers and men only served through constraint, dissolved itself after its failure and in the face of the vigorous Romanian counter-attack. Both officers and men returned to their homes.

All the material collected for the attack between the Danube and the Tisza was taken by the Romanians and the last Red troops (about a brigade), who had taken refuge in the Lake Bakony area, surrendered and were disarmed.

* * *

{Some notes about the change of government in Budapest and the Romanian occupation follow, but the fighting was now finished.}

* * *

Appendices

Appendix 26

{Cover letter}

[French] Army of Hungary
8 May 1919

Staff – 3rd Bureau [Intelligence]

Military Situation on the Hungarian Front

A. French Army

{Full detail on the position and strength of French forces.}

B. Romanian Army in Transylvania

The Romanian Army in Transylvania is composed of:

- 6 infantry divisions, of which two are Transylvanian;
- 1 cavalry division.

The Romanian infantry divisions comprise:

- 4 regiments of 3 battalions;
- 9 field batteries;
- 4 howitzer batteries;
- 1 cavalry squadron;
- 1 sapper battalion;
- various services.

Their effectives, including services, is from 8,000 to 10,000 men.

{Notes on the arrangement of forces, covered above.}

The campaign of the Army of Transylvania met serious enough resistance at certain points, notably in the north where the Székeler Division resisted very vigorously for two days before putting down their arms. The movement was moreover made in very unfavourable weather which not only made marching very tiresome but led to veritable inundations which considerably hindered the actions of the Romanian troops. The campaign of the Romanian Army was not slowed and the army of our allies showed an absolute and indisputable superiority over the forces they were facing. If certain Hungarian units of the old army fought well, they were nowhere able to recover once they had been thrown back. As for the Red Guards, who were maintained only by the promise of enormous wages, they showed no valour and were incapable of holding.

{Current positions and some speculation.}



C. Serbian Army

The information below is as exact as possible, but it is impossible to obtain more complete information from the Serbian GHQ.

The current organisation of the Serbian Army is aimed at fixing, from now on, the cadres of the organisation that will be realised with the complete passage from a war to a peace basis.

The territory is divided into four large army regions:

- First region – HQ Belgrade (provisionally Novi Sad): old Serbia and the Tisza region;
- Second region – HQ Sarajevo: Bosnia, Herzegovina, Montenegro;
- Third region – HQ Skopje: new Serbia (Macedonia);
- Fourth region – HQ Zagreb: the Save and Drava regions. [Slovenia and much of Croatia]

Each army region is divided into division regions.

The operational infantry divisions, which made up the two former Serbian Armies (1st and 2nd) at the time of the offensive of 15 September 1918, have ceased to exist. The cadres have been used to form the territorial infantry divisions.

The spread of Serbian troops is very variable. The troops are split up in the extreme, according to the circumstances. Certain territorial divisions, in particular those of the interior, have practically no troops.

According to the most recent information, the northern front appears to be held by the following:

Banat: [the area around Timișoara]

- 1 x infantry regiment;
- 1 x cavalry regiment;
- 1 x field artillery group of 2 batteries;
- 1 x mountain artillery group of 2 batteries;
- 1 x 155mm battery;
- 1 x 105mm section.

Bačka: [Presumably around Bačka Topola or Bačka Palanka]

- 1 x infantry division;
- 1 x cavalry brigade.

Baranya: [facing the modern Hungarian province?]

- 1 x infantry regiment;
- 1 x cavalry regiment;
- Some batteries

Between Mur and Drava [Rivers]:

- 1 x infantry regiment;
- Some batteries.

In the Drava region:

- 4 x Slovenian regiments, very weak and ill-equipped;
- Some batteries.

In the Ljubljana region:

- Some detachments

The Serbian troops stationed near to our troops and which we have been able to control with some precision are at good strengths. Thus the operational infantry division “Danube”, put at the disposition of the [French] Army of Hungary in the case of offensive action against Hungary has more than 16,000 men.

The Drava front is to be reinforced by Serbian battalions, coming from interior troops and which will be themselves replaced by a regiment raised in the Bačka area.

* * *



Place Names

A list of places mentioned in the text which have multiple names – useful for maps 6 and 10:

Abaújszanto	Albany Szanto			
Berettyó	Barcăul	(River)		
Carei	Carei Mare	Nagy Károly		
Cegléd	Szegled			
Cenad	Szerbcsanad			
Chişineu-Criş	Kisjenő			
Chop	Csap	Tapud		
Crasna	Kraszna			
Crişu Alb	Feherkörös	(River)		
Crişu Pietros	Feketekörös	(River)		
Danube	Duna	Dunărea	Donau (River)	
Ineu	Borosjenő			
Ipel'	Ipoly	(River)		
Căpruţa	Kaprucza			
Kőrös	Criş	(River)		
Košice	Kaschau	Kassa	Koalice	
Letávértés	Nagyléta			
Mukachëvo	Munkács			
Mureş	Maros	(River)		
Nová Baňa	Koenigsberg			
Novi Kneževac	Törökkanizsa			
Oradea	Oradea Mare	Nagyvarad	Grosswardein	
Radna	Maria Radna	basically Lipova		
Salonta	Nagyszalonta			
Sebiş	Boros Seber			
Seini	Szinyervaralja			
Someş	Szamos	(River)		
Szeged	Seghedin	Szegedin	Gyálarét	Tápé
Tisza	Theiss	Tisa (River)		
Tiszafüred	Tiszaszöllos			
Transylvania	Erdély	Ardeal	Siebenbürgen	
Uzhhorod	Ungvar			
Valea lui Mihai	Szentmihályfalva			
Vaşcău	Vaskoh			
Velké Kapušany	Nagy Kapos			
Vynohravdiv	Nagyszöllös			
Zaláu	Zilah			

